



The County Connection

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State commissioners listened intently as First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry provided an update of recent activities and the overall state of First 5 during the January 28 commission meeting.

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“We stepped up in December,” Perry said, referring to the recent monetary support First 5 state and county commissions provided to the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board (MRMIB), “but it’s not enough. The state has a \$40 billion budget deficit and the governor has proposed eliminating the state commission.”

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First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry explains the state's budget situation and the federal government's potential recovery assistance to state commissioners.

More than 60 stake holders, including local county commissioners, executive directors and state department administrators attended the three-hour meeting in Sacramento.

State commissioners in attendance included Vice Chair David Kears, Carla Dartis, Molly Munger, Dr. Maria Minon and Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis.

Perry presented an update on First 5's strategic plan and went on to describe the current budget situation, federal outreach and status of the various early childhood development programs.

She told commissioners that First 5 California staff continues to monitor the budget situation at the capitol and provide potential solutions to assist in closing the unprecedented budget gap. Perry assured commissioners that First 5 is working closely with allies such as childcare advocates within California and across the nation, the First 5 county commissions and State Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) and other legislative leaders.

Perry also discussed good news about potential federal recovery and reinvestment money intended to expand Head Start, the State Children's Health Insurance Program - also known as SCHIP - and the Individuals With Disabilities Act.

"There are many other opportunities coming out of the stimulus package that are consistent with our mission." Perry said, "The expansion of Centers for Excellence, early learning challenge grants and the child care block grants all present an opportunity for us to provide help in leveraging those dollars."

The next First 5 California commission meeting will be held April 29 in Sacramento.

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National Advocates Meet for Birth to Five Peer Advocate Roundtable

Eleven state teams engaged in advancing investments in quality, research-based early childhood development services for at-risk children ages 0 to 5, gathered in Chicago on January 22 and 23 for a Birth to Five Peer Advocacy Roundtable. The Ounce of Prevention Fund organized the

roundtable in conjunction with its sponsors: the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and an anonymous foundation.

California's team consisted of First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry, Commissioner Molly Munger, Co-Director of the Advancement Project, Deputy Director of Program Management Sarah Neville Morgan, and Scott Moore, senior policy advisor with Preschool California. Teams shared policy innovations and lessons learned across states in key areas. The roundtable included lead discussions by Early Childhood Advisory Councils and a presentation from Dr. Donna Bryant from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina on research findings on Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS).

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Efforts to Improve Early Childhood Mental Health

On January 12, a small team from First 5 California and WestEd's Center for Prevention and Early Intervention, the Special Needs Program's (SNP) Training and Technical Assistance contractor attended the First 5 county commissions' Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Systems Development Project meeting. The team focused on how to build collaborative efforts between the SNP and the ECMH Project and spent time discussing common project goals. Sarah Neville-Morgan presented on how First 5 California is building synergy to achieve a common vision and shared upcoming SNP TA events as well as recent program highlights.

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Statewide Screening Collaborative Working With Health and Human Services

First 5 California agreed to facilitate the Statewide Screening Collaborative and facilitated its first meeting on December 11, 2008. The Screening Collaborative brings together state agencies that administer or intersect with health and human services programs and several advocacy groups to work on

issues of mutual interest regarding the screening of children for developmental, behavioral, social and emotional, and overall health issues.

The Screening Collaborative objectives include improving outcomes among state programs involved in recognition and response activities and adopting common language, standard tools and screening protocol for families and children that affect healthy childhood development.

The Statewide Screening Collaborative members include First 5 California and the state departments of Developmental Services, Social Services, Mental Health, Public Health, Health Care Services, Education, Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board, Managed Health Care, Alcohol and Drug Programs, and the Judicial Council of California. Other organizations represented include WestEd; the Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities (UCLA); First 5 Association; and the Center for Human Services, Resource Center for Family-focused Practice (UC Davis).

WestEd, serving as the Special Needs Project technical assistance contractor, will assist First 5 in facilitating the work of the Screening Collaborative and coordinating with Special Needs Project activities.

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Yummy For Your Tummy Serves Up a Second Course

Phase Two of First 5 California's *Yummy For Your Tummy* launch is currently underway. This phase raises awareness in California's Latino communities about the benefits of eating healthy and how this free mini cookbook is helpful for families on a tight budget.

The kickoff highlights a distributed Radio News Release (RNR) featuring Chef LaLa to stations throughout the state. The RNR, recorded in both Spanish and English, encourages families to pick up a copy of the booklet at Albertsons stores or by calling 1-800-KIDS-025.

First 5 California also entered a new partnership with Save

Mart and its sister stores – S-Mart Foods, Lucky and Food Maxx – as part of their *SuperFriend* program, which provides nutrition education to young children and their families. Through this partnership, free copies of *Yummy for Your Tummy* will be available at 235 additional California grocery stores in northern California.

Please contact the First 5 California County TA team at (310) 552-4101 if you would like to receive customizable flyers promoting the mini cookbook and encouraging local participation in this free nutrition education program.

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New Year, New **Kit**

To help kick off the (Lunar) New Year, First 5 California officially launched the Asian-language versions of the *Kit for New Parents*. The much-anticipated free *Kits* are based on the current English-language *Kit*, and have been adapted to be culturally and linguistically appropriate for Asian-language speakers. They are available in four Asian languages – Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin and Vietnamese.

The new *Kits* were unveiled at a Jan. 14 press conference in Los Angeles.



Dr. Ricky Choi from the Asian Health Services in Oakland joined First 5 Executive Director Kris Perry at a press conference announcing the release of the Asian-language Kits for New Parents.

At the event, First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry introduced the Asian-language *Kits* to reporters representing some of the top Asian Pacific Islander American news outlets in the state. Perry provided an overview of the *Kit's* contents and purpose, and then played a five-minute preview video showcasing the *Kit's* parenting DVD in all four Asian languages.

Also present at the event was Dr. Ricky Choi, a pediatrician from Asian Health Services in Oakland. Dr. Choi shared his thoughts on how the *Kit* addressed an important need for recently immigrated Asian-language parents living in California.

"I believe this *Kit* will be a fantastic resource for families," Dr. Choi told reporters, "Parents who use the resources in this *Kit* will be well ahead of the game in caring for their baby. It is for this reason I am very excited that this *Kit* is now available in Asian-languages."

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First 5 California Annual Statewide Conference

First 5 California Annual Statewide Conference registration materials will be available by mid-February, although hotel reservations can be made immediately. If you plan to attend this year's conference, please contact the Hyatt Regency in San Francisco directly (415) 788-1234 and mention the First 5 Annual Conference to ensure a reservation at the conference site. Reservations must be made by March 20 to receive a discounted room.

Approximately 160 workshop proposals were submitted for review. Each proposal self-identified into one of the seven tracks and was reviewed by an input committee consisting of First 5 state and county commission staff, and other partners.

The conference begins with four pre-institutes on April 14:

- Early Learning Workforce Development Systems
- Through the Eyes of a Child: Protecting Children's

Potential through Court Collaboration

- Research and Linkages to Policy and Program
- Walking the Talk: Reflecting Equity and Diversity in Our Actions

On April 15 and 16, the conference offers more than 60 workshops in seven interest areas and six mini-institutes:

- Approaches to Obesity Prevention: Access to Nutritious Foods and Education
- First 5 California's Special Needs Project's Evaluation Results: A Framework for Best Practices
- Showcasing the Power of Preschool: Customizing Quality Preschool to Meet Local Needs
- CARES and Beyond
- Connecting to the Federal Landscape to Increase 0 to 5 Services in California
- The Happiest Babies and the Happiest Toddlers with Dr. Harvey Karp

Keynote speakers include, Jonathan Kozol, renowned author, social justice and education activist; Joan Lombardi, national expert and author on early childhood education and lead of President Obama's Early Childhood Transition Team; and Jessie Rasmussen, former Nebraska Senator and Vice President of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund.

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New Staff Joins First 5, Research and Evaluation Division

The First 5 California Research and Evaluation Division added another resource to its team with the hiring of Susan Takeda as a Research Program Specialist. Takeda holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and a Master of Business Administration degree.



First 5 California welcomes new Resarch Program Specialist Susan Takeda, far right, shown here with co-workers Tina Fitzgerald, center and Cindy Hobart

Prior to First 5 California, Takeda worked with several state agencies, including her most recent stint at the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS). Susan has worked on performance measurement projects and has been responsible for leading strategic planning, analyzing public policy issues and assisting with the infrastructure development for a grant-making agency.

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First 5 Research Project to Identify Hard-to-Reach Communities

First 5 California is undertaking a research project to identify hard-to-reach communities throughout California, such as smaller ethnic minority groups, isolated communities, and populations not exposed to mainstream media. ProProse, a social marketing agency in Sacramento, is leading the project along with team members from the UC Davis School of Public Health Sciences, ConsumerQuest, and U.S. International Media. The First 5 California Communications Division will oversee implementation of the research plan.

The project will survey a wide range of existing research studies about early childhood issues and populations in need. The ProProse team will then identify where these populations reside, which ones are hard to reach, the

languages they speak, and the best methods to communicate First 5 messages. It is an important step toward ensuring we are communicating with all Californians.

We invite county commission staff to share their knowledge with ProProse about hard-to-reach communities in your areas. We encourage you to share any information about local communities that are isolated by culture or language, as well as any community-based organizations or other trusted information sources that may be helpful in communicating with them. Please send your information to katie@proprose.com or call 916-359-8316.

Staff working on the project may also contact a few selected county commissions to gather more in-depth information about populations in specific areas as the study progresses. We anticipate having the final report complete by summer.

We are very excited about this project and the information it will yield to help us reach all Californians with First 5 messages and resources.

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